E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/1995/L.58
27 July 1995

Original: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1995
Geneva, 26 June-28 July 1995
Agenda item 3 (a)

COORDINATED FOLLOW-UP BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ORGANIZED BY THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Alexandru Niculescu (Romania)

The Economic and Social Council held a debate on the coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the results of major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields on 28 and 29 June, during its coordination segment. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (E/1995/86). As an additional element, a panel discussion was held on 30 June with the senior officials responsible for the preparation and follow-up of a number of conferences (the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development).

On ___ July 1995, the Economic and Social Council adopted the following agreed conclusions:

1. The Economic and Social Council takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (E/1995/86) and of the suggestions contained in it to assist in the formulation of a coordinated approach to the follow-up to those conferences.

2. The Economic and Social Council emphasizes that each conference has its thematic unity and recognizes that a coordinated follow-up implies that the major conferences should be viewed as interlinked and contributing to an integrated framework of and a global partnership for development.

3. Governments have the primary responsibility for the implementation of the declarations and programmes of action adopted by international conferences. The United Nations system has an important role in contributing to, assisting in, facilitating and reviewing the progress of the implementation of the results of those conferences at all levels and in further promoting their goals and objectives.

I. INTERGOVERNMENTAL LEVEL

A. Role of the General Assembly

4. The General Assembly, in its capacity as the highest intergovernmental mechanism for the formulation and appraisal of policy on matters relating to economic, social and related fields, has the overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of conference results and facilitating and reviewing the progress achieved. The Economic and Social Council shall assist in this task by making recommendations to the General Assembly on policies for an effective, efficient and coordinated follow-up to major international conferences.

5. The Council recommends that the General Assembly also address, within the framework of the discussions on an agenda for development, the integrated consideration of the themes common to major international conferences with a view to promoting better coherence and providing harmonized and integrated policy guidance. To this end, the General Assembly may consider improving the coherence of its Committees to ensure that the system is equipped to follow up effectively the integrated approach related to the outcomes of United Nations conferences. This should also result in improved complementarity and coherence in the follow-up to United Nations conferences between the Council and the General Assembly.

B. Strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council

6. The Economic and Social Council shall promote a coordinated and integrated follow-up to and implementation of major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields. Each year, within the framework of its coordination segment, the Council shall carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference. The theme related to the follow-up of conferences, to be considered at the coordination segment, shall be chosen at the Council's previous substantive session to allow for adequate preparations by the functional commissions, other relevant intergovernmental bodies and the Secretariat. The Secretary-General is invited, taking into account the suggestions made in paragraph 57 of his report (E/1995/86) and based on the

work of relevant subsidiary bodies and through consultations with Member States, relevant organs of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, to offer suggestions for possible common themes for consideration and decision by the Council.

7. Drawing on the reports of the functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies, the Secretariat shall prepare a single consolidated report outlining the activities being carried out by the United Nations system in order to achieve the goals and objectives related to the chosen theme and identifying the coordination and policy issues, at all levels, to be addressed by the Council and the General Assembly. The report shall contain an analysis of progress achieved and problems encountered as well as specific recommendations.

8. The consideration by the Council of the chosen theme could benefit from the active participation, through the submission of reports and dialogue, of the funds and programmes, the regional commissions and the relevant specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the World Trade Organization, as appropriate. The Council should develop a more focused dialogue with them.

9. The operational activities segment, within its role of providing overall coordination and guidance to the United Nations development system, may, in addition to the segment functions identified in General Assembly resolution 48/162, also consider themes related to the follow-up to major international conferences.

10. Reports of the functional commissions considered by the Council in its general segment should clearly identify issues that require the attention of the Council and/or a coordinated response.

11. The Council stresses the need to further review its work programme and working methods with a view to better fulfilling its responsibilities for coordination, guidance and conference follow-up.

12. In the context of the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences, improvements are needed in the functioning of the relevant segments.

13. In the follow-up to United Nations conferences, the Economic and Social Council shall ensure the harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions by promoting a clearer division of labour among them and providing clear policy guidance to them. To this end, better preparation of the meetings of the Council should be assured. The Council could periodically organize meetings on specific issues to allow for more dialogue with the chairpersons and the secretariats, as appropriate, of the functional commissions, other subsidiary and related bodies and the relevant executive boards. If an effective and coordinated follow-up process suggests the need, then the consolidation of activities of subsidiary bodies may be considered, as appropriate. The aim of sustaining and strengthening the quality and impact of the output of these bodies must be assured.

14. The regional commissions shall play an important role in assisting countries in each region in the implementation of the recommendations of conferences. The Council and the General Assembly shall take appropriate measures to ensure that the regional commissions can carry out this task effectively. The Council shall enhance coordination with and among the regional commissions, including through their more effective participation in its substantive work relating to conference follow-up, as indicated in paragraph 8 above.

15. Within the context of the follow-up to United Nations conferences, the interaction between the Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be improved. The General Assembly should also consider a stronger link between substantive, programming, coordination and budgeting processes.

C. Streamlining the work and strengthening the role of the functional commissions

16. The Council notes the present practice of assigning one functional commission or relevant intergovernmental body with the primary responsibility for the follow-up and review of the implementation of each conference. Inevitably, there may be some overlap and cases, when the themes and/or recommendations from different conferences are closely related, where one commission may have the responsibility for following up all aspects of a theme common to several conferences or where such responsibility may be shared. The functional commissions, within their respective mandates, should develop multi-year programmes of work for the follow-up and review of conference programmes of action. The Council, in cooperation with its functional commissions, shall ensure a better division of labour among them and coordination among their multi-year programmes and shall clarify the particular forms under which common themes should be considered by them. This would require that each commission or body focus on the core issues relating to the conference for which it is responsible and obtain inputs from other relevant bodies on related issues.

17. The mandates, composition and working methods of the functional commissions should be further reviewed, as appropriate, based on the scope of work involved and adjusted accordingly, to enable them to achieve greater coherence and mutual reinforcement and to better assist the Council in a strengthened and action-oriented manner in the coordinated follow-up and review of the progress of implementation of the outcomes of United Nations conferences.

II. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION AT ALL LEVELS

18. The Economic and Social Council takes note of the steps taken to enhance the effectiveness and improve the functioning of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its subsidiary bodies. Measures should be taken to further strengthen the role of ACC and its standing committees and ensure the systematic exchange of information and a rational division of labour between its standing committees, as well as between established ACC machinery and ad hoc mechanisms set up in the context of the follow-up to individual conferences. The examples of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the

inter-agency task force on the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development could be useful for the follow-up to other conferences but should not be seen as an automatic precedent. ACC is invited to bring system-wide coordination issues to the attention of the Council and to make recommendations thereon. Wider distribution of the report of ACC and further information for Member States on its work would be highly desirable. The relevant intergovernmental bodies should be kept fully informed of the establishment of any inter-agency task forces for the follow-up to conferences and of the work undertaken by them on a regular basis.

19. At the country level, the national government has the primary responsibility for coordinating, on the basis of national strategies and priorities, follow-up activities of conferences. The follow-up of activities that are relevant to the mandates of operational activities for development of the United Nations should, through the resident coordinator system, take into account common themes and goals and should be within the framework of national plans and strategies and the country strategy note, where they exist or are in preparation. In line with General Assembly resolution 47/199, the resident coordinator, in consultation with the government and in the light of national priorities, could utilize thematic groups composed of the agencies concerned, with a designated lead agency or task manager under his or her overall leadership, to serve as the coordination mechanism with the responsibility of developing integrated approaches for the realization of common goals, including, where appropriate, the development of a common data system at the national level to facilitate reviewing and reporting on the progress achieved.

III. REPORTING

20. In the preparation of reports by the Secretariat for the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, greater use could be made of the practice of having task managers, so that a particular United Nations agency would be responsible for coordinating the response of the entire United Nations system on a given subject, including the formulation of recommendations for future action. All reports should be presented in a timely manner and in a concise format, clearly identifying the issues and outlining options for action and their implications, so as to enable the Council and its subsidiary bodies to take decisions. The Secretary-General is requested to present proposals, for consideration by the Council in 1996 and by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, on the simplification of existing reporting requirements, taking into account the reports that will be required for the follow-up of United Nations conferences.

21. Other methods for the promotion of integrated reporting by the Secretariat should be explored. Requests for reports should be limited to the minimum strictly necessary. The Secretary-General should use information and data already provided by Governments to the maximum extent possible, avoiding duplication in requests for such information.

22. The Council stresses that the voluntary submission of national information, including, for example, information in the form of periodic communications or

national reports by Governments, represents a valuable contribution for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the recommendations of relevant conferences. The Secretary-General is requested to prepare a standardized and simplified format, which could be used by Governments in preparing information on a single subject or in clusters of subjects.

IV. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS, THE BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS AND THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

23. The Council emphasizes the need to further enhance the interaction and cooperation between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization at all levels, inter alia, to ensure effective follow-up to major international conferences. It notes also that the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions will also be addressed within the framework of the discussions on an agenda for development.

V. COORDINATION IN THE SECRETARIAT

24. Efforts towards coordinated follow-up to international conferences also require appropriate measures to avoid and/or eliminate duplication of functions within the United Nations Secretariat, in conformity with the mandates provided in relevant General Assembly resolutions.

VI. MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

25. Effective follow-up to conferences requires the urgent mobilization of resources for implementation. It is therefore critical to bring together the political will to mobilize and make available the necessary resources from all sources, public and private, both financial and human, at the national and international levels, if Member States, the United Nations system and the international community as a whole are to mount a full and effective response to conference agendas. To this end, it is important to enhance the effectiveness of official development assistance (ODA) and to increase it with the objective of achieving the accepted United Nations target for ODA of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, as reaffirmed in chapter 33.13 of Agenda 21 and by other relevant international conferences, such as the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development, as soon as possible. The mobilization of substantial new and additional resources from all sources, domestic and international, public and private, and from traditional and new sources in accordance with the relevant provisions of the programmes of action, would also be instrumental.